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opening the at least one blood vessel by moving at least one cutting device along a cutting path substantially transverse to the longitudinal axis of the neck and into the neck from one side of the neck towards an opposite side of the neck, the at least one blood vessel to be opened being located in the path of the cutting device,

wherein the body of the slaughter animal is repositioned from a position below the neck to a position above the neck either before or after opening of the at least one blood vessel in the neck.

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4. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one blood vessel opened comprises at least one jugular vein.

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6. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the slaughter animal is hung by its head.

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16. (Amended) A device for cutting into at least one blood vessel in the neck of a slaughter animal, in particular a fowl, comprising:

a neck positioning device for positioning the neck of the slaughter animal, wherein the neck comprises a longitudinal axis;

a blood vessel opening device for opening the at least one blood vessel, wherein the blood vessel opening device comprises at least one cutting device adapted to move along a cutting path substantially transverse to the longitudinal axis of the neck and into the neck from

one side of the neck towards an opposite side of the neck, wherein the at least one blood vessel which is to be opened being located along the cutting path of the cutting device; and

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and
a body repositioning device for repositioning the body of the slaughter animal from a position below the neck to a position above the neck, wherein the blood vessel opening device is adapted to open the at least one blood vessel before or after the body of the slaughter animal has been repositioned above the neck.

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Please add the following new claims:

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--63. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one blood vessel opened comprises at least one carotid artery. --

--64. (New) A method for mechanically opening at least one blood vessel in the neck of a slaughter animal, in particular a fowl, comprising:

positioning the neck of the slaughter animal; and

opening the at least one blood vessel by moving at least one cutting device along a path and into the neck from one side of the neck towards an opposite side of the neck, the at least one blood vessel to be opened being located in the path of the cutting device,

wherein the neck comprises a trachea and wherein the distance between the trachea and the at least one blood vessel is increased before the at least one blood vessel is opened. --

-- 65. (New) A device for cutting into at least one blood vessel in the neck of a slaughter animal, in particular a fowl, comprising:

a head carrier for carrying the slaughter animal by its head;

a neck positioning device for positioning the neck of the slaughter animal, wherein the neck positioning device engages the neck in the area which extends from the underside of the head of the slaughter animal to the second cervical vertebra; and

a blood vessel opening device for opening the at least one blood vessel, wherein the blood vessel opening device comprises at least one cutting device adapted to move along a cutting path through the neck from one side of the neck to another side of the neck, wherein the at least one blood vessel to be opened is located along the cutting path of the cutting device.--

--66. (New) A device for cutting into at least one blood vessel in the neck of a slaughter animal, in particular a fowl, comprising:

a neck positioning device for positioning the neck of the slaughter animal, wherein the neck comprises a trachea;

a separating device for increasing the distance between the trachea of the slaughter animal and the at least one blood vessel; and

a blood vessel opening device for opening the at least one blood vessel, wherein the blood vessel opening device comprises at least one cutting device adapted to move along a cutting path through the neck from one side of the neck to another side of the neck, wherein the at least one blood vessel to be opened is located along the cutting path of the cutting device. --

--67. (New) A device for cutting into at least one blood vessel in the neck of a slaughter animal, in particular a fowl, comprising:

a neck positioning device for positioning the neck of the slaughter animal;

Q3 - a blood vessel opening device for opening the at least one blood vessel, wherein the blood vessel opening device comprises at least one cutting device adapted to move along a cutting path through the neck from one side of the neck to another side of the neck, wherein the at least one blood vessel to be opened is located along the cutting path of the cutting device; and

a leg positioning device for positioning at least one leg of the slaughter animal in a leg support which interacts with the leg positioning device. --

-- 68. (New) A device for cutting into at least one blood vessel in the neck of a slaughter animal, in particular a fowl, comprising:

a neck positioning device for positioning the neck of the slaughter animal, wherein the neck positioning device comprises a head support for supporting the head and a shoulder support for supporting the shoulders of the slaughter animal; and

a blood vessel opening device for opening the at least one blood vessel, wherein the blood vessel opening device comprises at least one cutting device adapted to move along a cutting path through the neck from one side of the neck to another side of the neck, wherein the at least one blood vessel to be opened is located along the cutting path of the cutting device. --